THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI AJIT KUMAR PANJA): (a) The Tatkal Scheme has been introduced with effect from 1.1.2000. Bangalore Passport Office has issued 751 passports under this Scheme till 3.3.2000.

(b) New passports under the Tatkal Scheme can be issued within seven working days of the date of application complying the conditions of the scheme and on payment of a fee of Rs. 1500 in addition to the applicable passport fee. For new passports to be issued between eight and twenty eight working days the additional fee is Rs. 1000. Depending on the urgency the passport can either be delivered to the applicant or sent by post.

(c) As passport under Tatkal Scheme are issued on post-police verification basis, for security reasons these can be delivered to an authorised person only in exceptional cases.

(d) No Sir. The applications under the Tatkal Scheme are being accepted at the existing counters. However, a separate counter for accepting the additional fees for the out-of-turn passports has been set up at the Passport Office Bangalore.

Posting of Officials in SAARC countries

2339. DR. Y. LAKSHMI PRASAD: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether officials of the Ministry of External Affairs prefer posting in neighbouring countries like Dhaka rather than Tokyo;

(b) if so, the reasons therefor; and

(c) the reasons for amending rules to make posting in neighbouring SAARC countries more effective?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI AJIT KUMAR PANJA): (a) to (c) Officials of the Ministry of External Affairs are posted to our Missions/Posts abroad on the basis of a number of considerations which include, *inter-alia,* their seniority, suitability and experience for a particular assignment, keeping in mind also the principle of rotation. The postings are decided by the three Boards constituted for the purpose: the Foreign Service Board (FSB), the Senior Establishment Board (SEB) and the Junior Establishment Board (JEB).